

March 2, 2015

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and Appropriations Committee members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Connecticut's libraries and request that you restore funding to the Connecticut Library Consortium, Connecticard, and Grants for Public Libraries, and do not repeal Conn. Gen. Stat. Sec. 11-9e via passage of Governor's Bill No. 942.

In an environment where local governments talk more and more about regionalizing resources in order to streamline services and save money, the notion of cutting these programs is misguided at best.

Since 1976, the Connecticard system, which allows residents to use their hometown library card at any public library in the state of Connecticut, has been a national model for cooperation and resource sharing. Not only is this system extremely convenient for our library patrons, it also serves to, in effect, treat the entire state as one big library collection. This is a great benefit to all of our libraries, but especially smaller ones: thanks to statewide lending, residents of small towns with small libraries and small budgets have access to the same materials that residents of larger, wealthier towns do. Funding received through the Connecticard program offsets this cost of providing service to out-of-town residents.

The Connecticut Library Consortium is absolutely vital to our state's libraries. They negotiate substantial discounts on our behalf for everything a library needs – not just books and audiovisual materials but also processing supplies, technology, databases, furniture, and more – and also provide invaluable continuing education and support to the library community. The Canton Public Library, where I work, saved \$31,562.18 in FY14 thanks to CLC's tireless work, while the Burlington Public Library – my hometown library – saved \$20,034.90. And these are just two small towns with a combined population of under 20,000 – CLC's impact statewide is measured in the millions of dollars. As a library director, I am glad that I am able to utilize CLC's discounts and services to stretch my budget and maximize what I am able to provide to my patrons – and I cannot emphasize enough that there is no way I could make up that \$31,562.18 from our town appropriation. Eliminating CLC serves only to pass on costs to already-strapped municipal budgets and will not result in any cost savings to taxpayers.

The March 2015 issue of The Rotarian Magazine had a wonderful article about libraries, written by Joe Queenan. Mr. Queenan said it better than I could:

"The wide array of things that libraries offer means that they reach all levels of society. They make society better than it would be if left to its own devices. Libraries are a subtle, almost cunning, bulwark against the racial and socioeconomic segregation that society naturally gravitates toward, even when it does not do so out of malice. People congregate in libraries in a way that they do not congregate elsewhere. Because they are not bound by narrow class or economic or cultural strictures, libraries can cater to everyone...The library is the only place where people of all colors, creeds, ages, and political beliefs freely, easily, and inadvertently intermingle."

Libraries serve everyone, and Connecticut's libraries, with their long history of innovative and cost-effective resource sharing, do an extraordinary job of meeting the educational, informational, and cultural needs of all of our residents. I ask you – not just as a librarian, but as a mother, a reader, a passionate believer in lifelong learning and enrichment, and an involved member of my community – to preserve funding for all of our state library services.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sarah McCusker  
Director, Canton Public Library